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ABSTRACT

In an effort to put into action an increased interest in interdisciplinary teaching at the higher education level, a model for interdisciplinary instruction was designed and used for a seminar on ancient urbanization and city development. The model for the seminar used what Robin Fogarty has termed "webbed" likening this perspective to that of a telescope, with "a broad view of a constellation as one theme, webbed to the various elements." The format was a seminar with about 12 students and 2 primary objectives: to provide a historical survey of the origins and early development of urban centers and to introduce students to the problems commonly facing urban societies. Student study focused on city planning, politics, the economy, sociology, and leisure. Four texts provided background material. Introductory presentations illustrated the origins of the city in various areas. Then students researched specific cities in a case study format. The webbed approach was particularly helpful in the case study work. After students observed presentations on several cities, they presented their own case studies of the cities they had chosen to research. The seminar also used CD-ROM programs that have been developed to study cities of Ancient Greece. These programs, one of which is interactive, contain a data base of reference materials, libraries of major authors, and various types of graphics. (JB)

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Interdisciplinary Model
Urban Studies:
A Seminar on the Origins and Development of Cities

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As instructors at the college level, we often espouse the benefits of interdisciplinary study. We speak of the importance of a multicultural approach and of the benefits interdisciplinary study has for students as they come to understand that dilemmas in our urbanized society have ramifications of a global nature, affecting the environment, politics, economics, social relations, and education. We then go to our offices, continue our specialized research, and teach the courses in our specific disciplines. If we are going to be serious about interdisciplinary study, to use the terminology of teachers in Athens during the fifth century B. C., we need to bring our *erga* (actions) into agreement with our *logoi* (words). I have formulated the following interdisciplinary model with that objective in mind: to put into action an interdisciplinary approach at the college level.

In developing this model of I have drawn on three basic experiences: (1) my background in Classics, (2) participation in seminars, and (3) teaching an interdisciplinary course at the college level. My own area of specialization, Classics, has long demanded an interdisciplinary approach, for while the focus has been on the languages, full comprehension of the classical languages derives from an understanding of the cultural experience those languages reflect. As a consequence, a classicist must understand history and, since archaeology is a basic source for ancient history, archaeological background is also warranted. That background, in turn, demands an understanding of art since there is little distinction between art and archaeology in antiquity. Moreover, the study of the languages demands an understanding of the diverse areas of the literature, such as drama, history, law, natural science, philosophy, and poetry.

Participation in seminars, in which small groups, usually no more that

twelve, focus on a specific topic, has also strongly influenced the formulation of this model. Teachers of such seminars often act more as coordinators of the the various studies undertaken by the participants, who usually share their experiences with the rest of the group and ultimately formulate their investigations into a culminating project.

Finally, my experience in teaching an interdisciplinary course at James Madison University has also affected my notions of such studies. That course, entitled "Freshman Seminar," was formulated by faculty from various disciplines, such as Economics, Education, English, Foreign Languages, History, Mathematics, Philosophy, and Sociology, with the objective of developing the students' analytical skills through examining readings in four basic areas: literature, philosophy, science, and sociology. The objective, however, was not to view these areas as isolated disciplines, but as areas with numerous connections and to encourage an understanding of the analytical skills demanded of modern students as they approach any area of learning.

Urban studies is particularly appropriate for interdisciplinary study since urbanization provides the dominant way of life in the modern world, thus providing an excellent frame of reference for today's students. Not only does a greater proportion of the world's population live in cities today than ever before, but cities by nature are multicultural. Anyone who has traveled along the streets of a large American city can readily attest to an ethnic richness evident in the restaurants encountered, along with the signs proclaiming the various shops. The ethnic diversity of cities, moreover, accounts for much of what makes them exciting, yet the diverse ethnic groups of the city somehow work together to solve the urban problems; indeed, the very survival of a city depends upon the cooperation of disparate groups that usually have distinct cultural roots. Thus urban studies

provide an excellent base for a multicultural approach.

The primary view I have adopted in this model is what Robin Fogarty has termed "webbed," likening this perspective to that of a telescope, with a "broad view of an entire constellation as one theme, webbed to the various elements."[1] The theme of this model then is the origin and development of the city. While there is a clear historical focus implicit in examining the early development of cities, the objectives of this study are not purely historical; rather the basic purpose is to introduce students to the problems that face urban societies in general. These early cities can provide a sort of microcosm of the urban setting. Many of these cities, moreover, have developed into the large metropolitan centers of today and, as a consequence, can provide students with a deeper appreciation of what has made these urban centers what they are.

The format of this study is that of a seminar, with approximately twelve participants. The two primary objectives of this seminar are to provide a historical survey of the origins and early development of urban centers and to introduce students to the problems commonly facing urban societies. To meet these two objectives study focuses on the following topics: city planning, politics, the economy, sociology, and leisure. Although there is extensive literature on ancient cities, the following texts provide excellent background material:

Mumford, Lewis. *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961.

Scientific American: Ancient Cities. Special Issue, Vol. 5, no. 1, 1994.

Scully, Vincent. *Architecture: The Natural and the Manmade.* New York: St. Martin's, 1991.

Tomlinson, Richard. *From Mycenae to Constantinople: The Evolution of the Ancient City.* London: Routledge, 1992.

[1] Robin Fogarty, *The Mindful School: How to Integrate the Curricula* (Palatine: Skylight, 1991) xv.

Through introductory presentations the coordinator of the seminar illustrates the origins of the city in different parts of the world. Since archaeological evidence suggests that the earliest cities were established in the near east, the evidence from excavations in Mesopotamia and at Jericho is presented first; next the African experience, reflected in ancient Egypt; then the Asian experience, reflected in excavations at Mohenjo-Daro on the Indus River; and the pre-Columbian experience evident in the remains of Teotihuacan in Mexico. This global perspective demonstrates that diverse groups of people established cities, thus introducing a significant multicultural aspect of urbanization.

Following the introductory material, the format is to examine specific cities as case studies. Since a relatively complex urban society flourished in the Mediterranean world during the Hellenistic-Roman period (c. 300 B.C.-A.D. 400), the cities of the Mediterranean basin provide an excellent set of examples. Focus on this historical period and geographical region has the advantages of a wealth of evidence, both archaeological and literary, and a location that lends itself to multicultural diversity, inasmuch as the Mediterranean is bounded by three continents. Such an urban society, moreover, allows students to explore an urban civilization comprised of several cities, yet still relatively small compared to the modern world of gigantic industrialized cities.

To explore this early urban civilization, the interdisciplinary or webbed approach to specific cities that serve as case studies proves to be most serviceable. This approach begins with city planning and engineering, which in turn demand an exploration of technology. Planning and engineering of technology in cities, however, must be administered; thus from technology the approach proceeds to an exploration of the politics of the city. Political regulation of trade and commerce, moreover, leads to an exploration of urban economy. Next the lives of people who

make the regulations and do the buying, selling, and servicing in the city receive sociological study as religion, family life, and education are examined. Lastly the examination of leisure activities in the city allows the exploration of areas such as drama, literary arts, and sports.

Following basic presentations of these aspects of city life using one or two of the major cities such as Alexandria, Athens, Jerusalem, or Rome, students present their own case studies of specific cities they have chosen to research. As a result of their research students clearly gain a deeper appreciation for the development of a city. At the same time, by sharing their work with others, they can also come to appreciate more effectively the common characteristics and problems shared by cities in general.

Finally because recent developments of CD-ROM data bases have opened up exciting possibilities for interdisciplinary approaches, a few words about the use of these materials in studying the origins and development of the city are in order.[2] A program entitled *Perseus* provides not only an interdisciplinary approach, but also easy access to multimedia presentations. A group of classicists, historians, and archaeologists have developed *Perseus* for Macintosh equipment with CD-ROM and videodisc capabilities. These formats provide a virtual storehouse of resources, including descriptions, drawings, photographs of hundreds of pieces of art, and site plans, sketches, and photographs, both aerial and ground, of at least 800 archaeological sites. The program also contains a data base of reference materials,

[2] For years, slide collections designed to accompany texts and manuals have proved to be very valuable to interdisciplinary studies. An excellent example useful for urban studies is that by John T. Davis, et al., *Aspects of Roman Civilization* (Columbus: Merrill, 1980), a program of slide presentations integrated with a study guide. The presentations, illustrated with maps, charts, diagrams, and photographs, are divided into five groups: three of them, devoted to architecture, city planning, and engineering, are particularly serviceable to illustrate Hellenistic-Roman technology. Another chapter, devoted to Roman art, can be used to illustrate other aspects of urban life. The quality of this collection makes it particularly valuable, but more recent computerized programs clearly offer more facility.

including maps and a glossary. In addition to this data *Perseus* also contains a library of major authors, with complete texts in both Greek and in English translation, plus biographies of the authors. The program is extremely versatile, lending itself to the type of presentation formerly carried out through slides and to interactive use by students on an individual basis. The versatility of this program is particularly serviceable to an interdisciplinary study of the ancient city. To use the city of Athens as an example, one could view aerial photography of the business district of the ancient city as it appears today surrounded by the modern city, along with site plans, photographs of the remaining buildings, and artists' conceptions of what the buildings originally looked like; also, slides showing ancient weights and measures found in the area and texts describing the business district could also be viewed, much of this with a split-screen technique. The *Perseus* project, moreover, is in its early stages and the editorial team is currently working on an expansion of the already large data base.

Scientific American has also developed a CD-ROM program entitled *Exploring Ancient Cities*, which can be used in conjunction with its special issue, *Ancient Cities*. Similar to *Perseus*, this program includes maps, other graphics, and text; it is also interactive, thus of use for either demonstrations or on an individual basis.

To be sure, this new software is exciting to use, but more importantly it offers greater facility for interdisciplinary approaches. The ability to associate the physical layout of a city directly with the words spoken and written by its inhabitants about their daily life can vividly enhance our understanding of the diversity of life in these cities. Such understanding of human diversity brought together in an urban setting is crucial to a deeper appreciation of the problems of life in the city.

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